

Cut energy use, reap rewards

Governor's report estimates savings from efficiency recommendations would be worth \$7.1 billion over next eight years

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A governor's report released Tuesday shows billions of dollars in economic rewards are within the state's reach if government, residents and businesses adopt energy-saving steps that are technically, socially and economically feasible right now.

The analysis comes a week after Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr.'s Blue Ribbon Advisory Council on Climate Change issued a grim global-warming report along with a host of suggestions for change. Unlike the earlier report, however, the Utah Energy Efficiency Strategy findings include cost-benefit analyses and details on how to put the measures into play.

The governor's goal is to see a 20 percent reduction in energy use by 2015, with 2005 the baseline year. The report estimates the savings from 23 separate efficiency recommendations would be worth \$7.1 billion over the next eight years.

"One of the most important investments we can [make] is energy efficiency," Dianne Nielson, Huntsman's energy policy adviser and former executive director of the state Department of Environmental Quality said during an afternoon news conference.

The goal is the most ambitious efficiency initiative of any U.S. governor, said report co-author Howard Geller of the Boulder, Colo.-based Southwest Energy Efficiency Project.

The Energy Efficiency Strategy would save electricity, natural gas, vehicle fuels and other petroleum products. The report took into account about 85 percent of all Utah's energy use, but didn't look at jet fuel use, liquefied petroleum gas or industries' use of direct coal-burning.

The calculations assumed the state population would continue to grow but shows how residents could reduce the number of miles traveled each year and assumed increased use of energy-efficient appliances and vehicles.

The report also included a number of case studies, such as Moroni Feed Company's decision to upgrade and retrofit its condensers and compressors at its processing plant, Utah Indoor Soccer's switch to higher-efficiency lighting and Kennecott Land's energy-efficient Daybreak housing development on the west side of the Salt Lake Valley.

A particularly innovative approach by Sapp Brothers Travel Center in Salt Lake City shows how company executives who pay attention to energy news can get ahead of the game.

The travel center near Interstate 215 and 1300 South has contracted with IdleAire Technologies of Knoxville, Tenn., to install electric ports over 51 of the Sapp Brothers' parking spaces. The ports allow truckers to turn off their engines but still have all the comforts of heat, air conditioning, television and other amenities their diesel engines allowed.

While that means Sapp Brothers might sell less fuel, the company gets a cut of the concession's proceeds, said travel center manager Mark Stevenson.

Company executives signed the contract with IdleAire in 2001.

After getting 80 percent of the \$850,000 start-up cost from the Utah Department of Transportation, the operation began in May and already has set records for use, Stevenson said. The Energy Strategy report estimates the project will save 175,000 gallons of diesel worth \$580,000 annually.

Whether all or any of the report's recommendations will become reality is still a big unknown.

And while the report also showed the energy efficiencies would mean the state could avoid 8.9 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2015, those savings are virtually wiped out twice a day at the Intermountain Power Project coal-fired plant near Delta that serves Los Angeles and other southern California cities.

The report includes recommendations for utilities to manage their operations more efficiently, but doesn't address carbon dioxide emissions from generation or analyze Utah's near-total reliance on the dirty power source.

Here are the 11 top-priority energy-saving recommendations of 23 included in Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr.'s Energy Efficiency Strategy released Tuesday. Full implementation of the following could reduce electricity use by 18 percent by 2015, natural gas by nearly 14 percent and gasoline use by 18 percent:

- * More electric utilities demand management practices aimed at reducing energy consumption

- * More efficiency programs for natural gas utilities

- * New building codes to upgrade energy efficiency and funds for building inspector training

- * Lamp and appliance standards not already covered by federal policy

- * More funds for low-income residents' home weatherization programs

- * Stimulate industrial energy reductions through challenge and recognition programs

- * Energy-saving targets for state agencies

- * Enhanced fuel efficiency for cars and light trucks

- * Auto-insurance rates based on the number of miles traveled

- * Reduce vehicle miles traveled

- * Funds for a broad-based public education programs like the successful Go With the Flow water-conservation campaign